

Listening to Hear and Speaking to be Heard

Although we cannot really predict the future, I believe we can try to nurture and gently mold it for the highest good of all. With 2011 primed to be a year for making a difference (at the speed of light), it seems appropriate to try to get our lines of communication in order. If we can at least hear each other speaking, we have a better chance to co-create positive changes together in unity and joy.

Speaking/listening, or a lack of it, has caused many of us a considerable amount of trouble. Clear communication seems as elusive as the pot of gold, perhaps because we were not educated in the topic as a child. As the new 'children of light', begin to find themselves in positions of power, it could actually be put on the top of the school curriculum, but for now...we're on our own.

Practicing listening normally begins with rounds of sharing with the intention to begin to hear another's request and notice our response. Our response goes beyond the physical...just as important is, what was the inner response? were we present? empathic? emotional? responsive?

A common practice for teaching empathy is to have someone imagine a time when something similar happened to them. The intention *while listening* is to create feelings within to try and emulate what is alive for the other person. The potential flaw with this strategy is it does not allow a true connection to another person's sharing. It becomes another way of staying disconnected and safe, when disconnection is precisely what we are trying to avoid. Disconnection often shows up when you are listening to someone and your response is to jump in to tell your own story or give 'fix-it' advice.

I believe a powerful facet of listening/speaking is to develop the skill of going into resonance with someone else's feelings, in an empathic manner. Meaning, 'staying with' the other

person to be able to reflect back what they are saying, even if it is their own words repeated. The goal is to experience the feeling that rises between you when they truly feel heard. That is an amazing, spontaneous, kinesthetic moment of connection - being together with the divine in each of us.

Some steps to truly hear someone for the purpose of deepening a connection could be:

- ~ Listen with an intention to connect deeper to another - a heart connection
- ~ Regardless of the topic, observe what inner responses come up for you. Recognize these as though in a Buddhist meditation-begin to notice your responses as personal responses without judgement and go back to what words you are hearing.
- ~ Notice if you want to share your story or if you want to give advice and simply let it go by without acting upon these urges.
- ~ If there are a lot of words coming at you, ask for a pause to try to tell back what you heard. Suggest you want to get it and hear what they are saying.
- ~ Reflecting back what you have heard, may create a response that takes them to another topic. This is an opportunity to track. Developing tracking skills will allow you to come back to the main trigger point in the future with more ease rather than being taken down the garden path to some other situation.

Experience the connection that begins to develop within someone who is truly being listened to and also sense the change within you. I have seen faces change before me, into a beautiful reflection of the calm and beauty the person being listened to feels inside. In the same breath, I also notice a sense of beauty in myself.

The outcome of really listening and likewise being heard, is a shift. People appear to become grounded, more calm and able to express possibly for the first time, their sense of inner strength and autonomy.

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